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"CREPUSCLE."

After a Painting by Alexis J. Fournier. Salon 1901.

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FINE ARTS JOURNAL

Vol. XIV. CHICAGO, MARCH, 1903. No. 3

MODERN ART AND ARTISTS.

ALEXIS J. FOURNIER—
Minnesota Painter of Exceeding Versatility.

"Blessed are those who help us to see."
—William A. Quayle ("In God's Out-of-Doors.")

DURING October of last year, Barbizon — that nook of France that has been so much of an inspiration to her artist sons—came to Chicago through the eyes of a Minnesota artist. Of the forty-three paintings hung in one of the large galleries of the Art Institute at that time, about thirty of the number depicted scenes on and near the Oise River—the stream that Daubigny and his confreres immortalized. The little village, Auvers on the Oise, where Daubigny built a home, was shown under every aspect of nature, and the home of the artist, who with a song in his heart and a smile on his lip wrought those triumphs which later brought him fame, was seen bathed in a mystic moonlit atmosphere in which a younger artist from the far Western hemisphere—Alexis J. Fournier—had caught much of the poetical inspiration characteristic of the Barbizon painter himself. Daubigny had been dead many years, but Nature's inspiration still lingered and Fournier became the more modern interpreter.

Although Mr. Fournier has studied the heavens until he is able to grasp the significance of the "goings of the winds," and storm and sunshine are equally familiar to him, his delineations evince preference for the hour when "sun's departing ray flings back a lingering, lovely afterday."

"Sunset after Rain" is superb. The clouds lift and drift above and over a curtain of crimson, while the landscape, rich with touches of foliage, is caught in a mystic, spiritual atmosphere, foretelling the approach of evening. The little stream wending back from the foreground is a dream in reflected color. Above the glory of crimson is a suggestion of greenish-blue which melts into the riven masses that waging war since morning, now pass like defeated and bewildered battalions in review before their conqueror—the king of day. The tender mantle of evening is already enveloping the forest, and the earth sighs at the passing away of a splendor at once so majestic and so ephemeral. One is not surprised to learn that the artist devoted several years to the study of this one canvas. There is a depth of feeling and sentiment characteristic of the seeker after Nature's truths. This work, lyrical in its beginning, gained the strength and force of a tragedy ere its finish. The Paris Herald says of this work: "It is a picture that will do Mr. Fournier some good in the future." Thus does the foreign critic honor the work of a clever American artist.

Mr. Fournier has a deft method of suggesting an atmosphere, when the "clouds consign their treasure to the fields," and all the landscape lies

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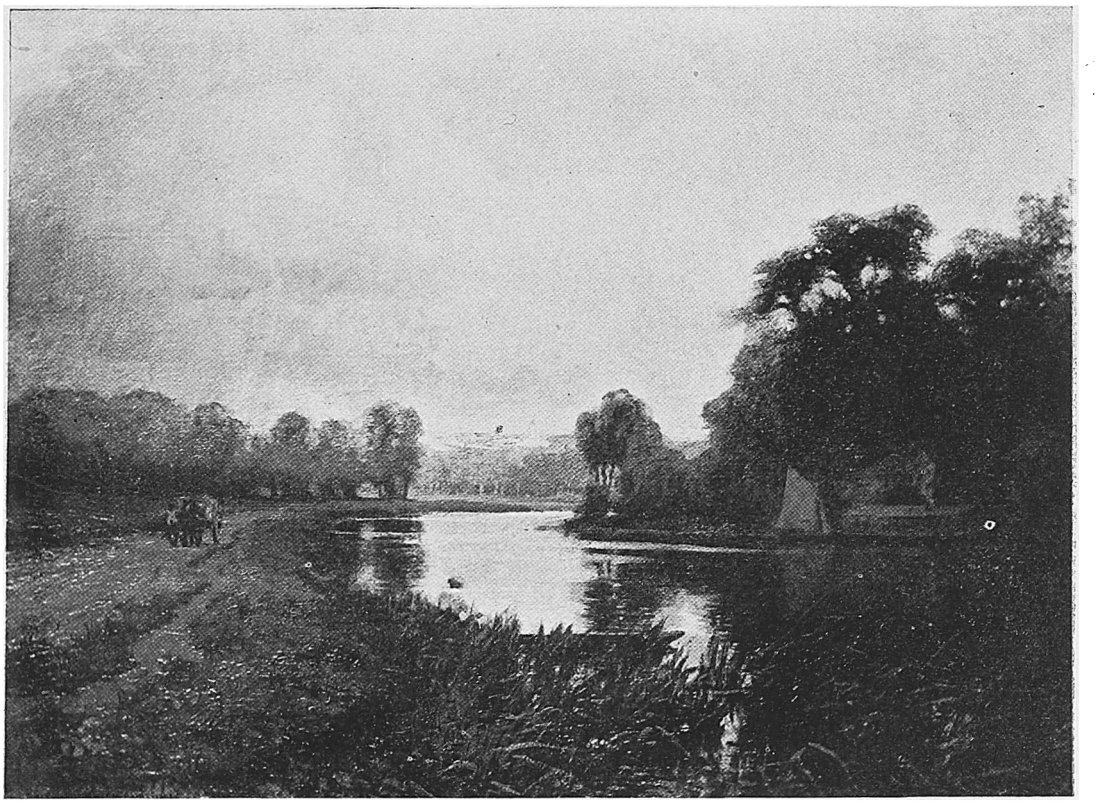
freshened and moist beneath the sprinkling touch. Then again in other works there is the "pencil'd shadowing" and "dewy light" of softened day which we associate with twilight. Still he follows Nature in her onward march and the "west with second pomp is bright," or "all the air a solemn stillness holds," and evening is fast mellowing into the pale gold of night whose bars lie on the "landscape green," until a "lovelier, purer light than that of day" permeates the landscape and bathes the old shepherd and his flock in the quivering gleam of an hour fraught with solemnity and quiet beauty.



SUNSET AFTER RAIN.
—Alexis J. Fournier.

Mr. Fournier has spent time in Barbizon, and the same spirit that took possession of that remarkable school of painters recognized as "Barbizon," and made them see Nature as no other painters had ever seen it before, and remarkably few since, has taken possession of the Western artist, and the lush meadows, the winding stream, the blue skies traversed by the drifting battalions from cloudland, all had a message which he learned to interpret with a skill that is a triumph. He also went to Italy, and some of his pictures in the exhibition named proved that the coloring of Venice appealed strongly to him, for in his "Bride of the Adriatic" we discover the brilliant reflections of a setting sun in the water with a background of towers and domes of the white architecture lifting toward the sky in which the lamp of night is striving for ascendency. Most of this artist's work possesses fine tonal quality, and whenever figures are introduced in the landscape they are always subordinate to the landscape itself. He paints sheep and goats well. They are beautifully modeled, cleverly grouped, and although each of such works may be designated a "sheep" picture, yet the landscape itself is so truly poetic, and strong, and beautiful, that we feel the latter first and look upon the animals as an accessory to complete a deep inspirational theme suggested by Nature alone.

Mr. Fournier will be thirty-eight years of age on this coming fourth of July. So he is yet a young artist, but one of the most promising of our young American painters of landscape. As will be concluded by his name, he is of French parentage. His father was a millwright and a

man of considerable skill in mechanics, and lived in St. Paul, Minn., where Alexis was born. Our artist, after receiving a common school education, went to Minneapolis, and found employment in a sign shop there, his love for color suggesting this work. One can readily understand how this soon palled on the youth's artistic taste, for he had already vowed to devote himself to the study of the fine arts. About this time he had opportunity to devote himself to scene painting. This was a more encouraging employment, worked perseveringly and energetically and produced a remarkable number of good pictures even at this early period.

"Fortune favors the brave," and young Fournier was asked to accompany an expedition to the neighborhood of the "Cliff Dwellers," and here he made a number of sketches and furnished himself with detail that enabled him later to help in the artistic development of that exhibit at the Columbian Exposition. The close of the exhibition saw Mr. Fournier on his way to Paris. To

BRIDE OF THE ADRIATIC.
—Alexis J. Fournier.

for here he could express himself by means of brush and paint without being cramped by the more arbitrary environment of sign painting. In his leisure hours he was constantly out in the open observing and sketching. He learned to study the development of tree growth, their particular characteristics involved in the change of season, until forest and field, stream and lakeside became inspirations to him. Always bearing in mind that he should at some time in the not far distant future attain the Eldorado he so much desired—a chance to study in Europe—he this latter city he took one of his earliest pictures, which was later exhibited in the Salon. He lost no time after his arrival in commencing his studies at the Julian Academy under Jean Paul Laurens, Benjamin Constant, Gustav Courtois, and Henri Harpignes, from all of whom he received much encouragement.

In about fifteen months he returned to his native land, bringing with him his work which had been most successful and which sold well in America. These canvases represented French and Italian landscape and were exhibited at Bos-

ton, as well as other cities. Again our young artist sought the foreign countries for inspiration, and the last and most important exhibition to which allusion has been made is the result of this later study.

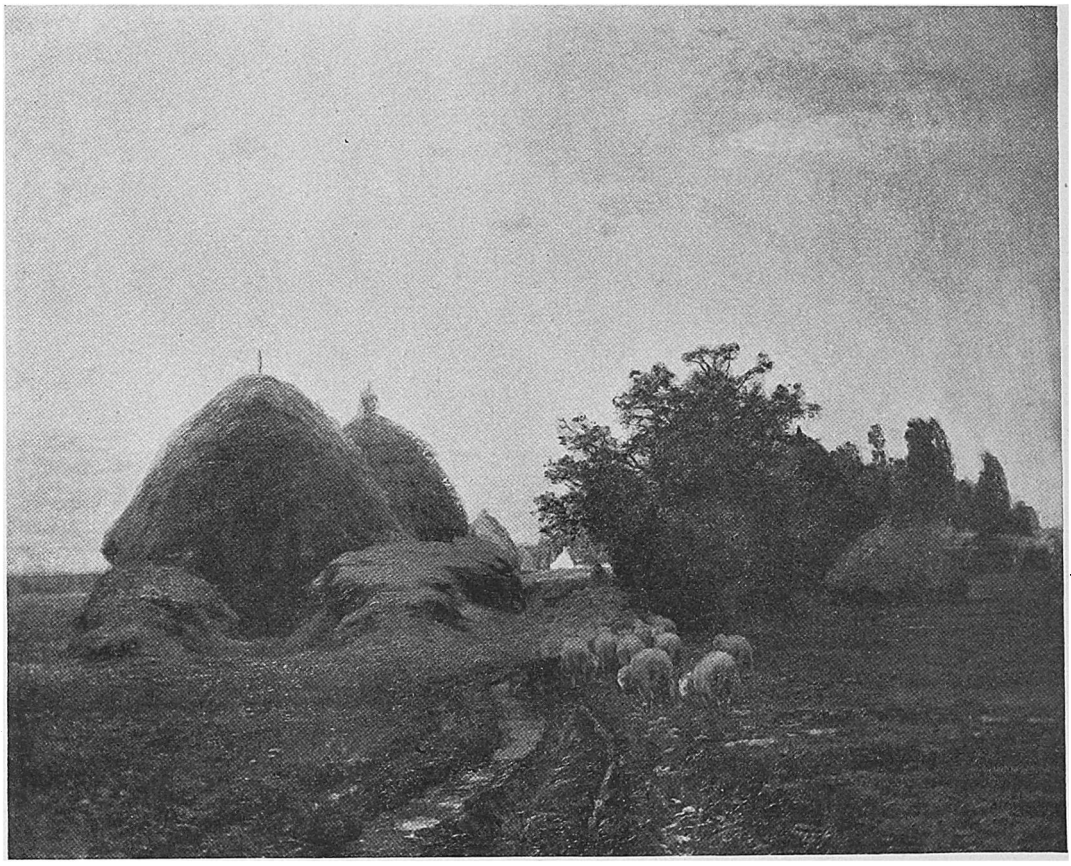
Since then Mr. Fournier is working at his studio in Minneapolis, and possibly receiving inspiration from the adjoining picturesque country. He should now devote hmself to the scenery of his own land, for purchasers of works of art in America are growing more appreciative of native efforts. Of a very retiring nature, Mr. Fournier puts a good deal of his thought and soul in his work, and like all geniuses, he is modest to a fault. He courts candid criticism, but carping fault-finding, the outcome of envy or ignorance, wounds his sensitive nature. Perhaps this is why he is so retiring.

AFTER A PAINTING.
—By Alexis J. Fournier.

Mr. Fournier is represented in the permanent collection of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts. This is a justly deserved honor, and proves that the art patrons of Minneapolis are not indifferent to the work of the local artists, although it is for them and for others to prove their appreciation of so clever an artist by creating an environment of appreciation that will keep Mr. Fournier true to the instincts of his country. For no matter how well nor how beautifully an artist may paint foreign environment, we who are interested in the future welfare of our country, desire to see our artists express their patriotism through their art. Mr. Fournier is a member of the American Art Association, Paris, and has exhibited at the Salon many times; of the Society of Western Artists, and of the Society of Associated Arts.

In the Salon of 1901 he exhibited "Crepuscle," a delightful canvas, poetical to a degree. There is a flock of sheep grouped around an aged shepherd, on a hillside, the figure of the man silhouetted against a darkening sky, from which a golden moon is emerging. But over landscape, man and sheep is that tender atmospheric suggestion of the sweets of evening. It recalls Will-

iam Quayle's poetical description of the gloaming: "When the labor of the light is ended, when our work lies behind us like a plain crossed in journeying toward high hills, there is a borderland sweet as dreams lying dim between day and dark. This is the gloaming. It is day's respite from itself, when what we are is merging in what we are to be; when the world seems far removed, as waves beating on a distant shore; when as in a neutral territory we belong neither to to-day nor to-morrow, but in a certain high regard belong to ourselves alone." And this is the thought suggested by the figure of the aged shepherd on the brow of the hill in this beautiful of all creations by Fournier. Is it any wonder that Zangwill said, when he saw it hanging in the Salon: "Tell Fournier that I think his picture this year is a veritable poem."



AFTER A PAINTING.
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